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An Experimental Inquiry

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into good W. E. H.

The supposed virtues of the Stillingia.

Offered to the Trustees & Professors  
of the Medical School of Philadelphia

as an Inaugural address  
for the degree of M. D.

by

L. C. Furcraut

of Charleston

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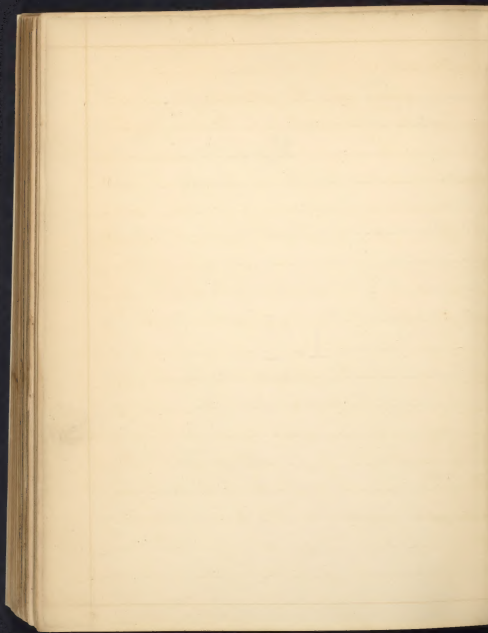
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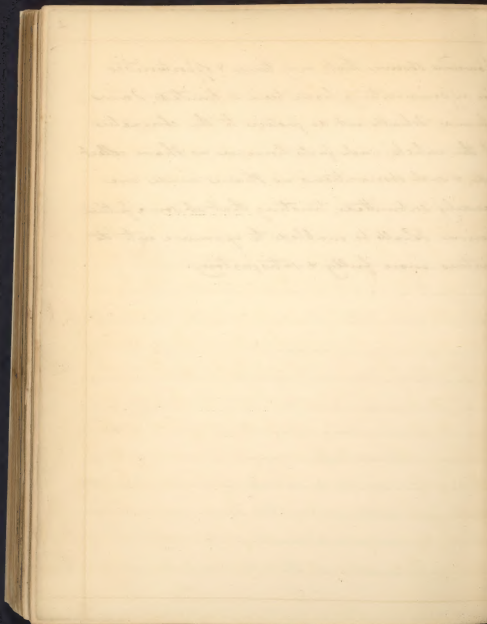
Gentlemen

I freely offer the following pages to your consideration, not under the impression that they will command or even deserve your attention, but to fulfil a duty required of me, as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Medicine.

During the course of the last summer there appeared among us, in the city of Charleston, a remedy that was to cure almost all diseases, under the title of the "Queen's-De-light." Having heard of many surprising cures made of it, in Rheumatism, Venereal Syphilis, cutaneous diseases &c, &c, I determined to test its virtues by experiment, for my own satisfaction; I did so; and having resolved to offer myself for graduation, I thought it would be as well to make a draught X upon your patience in this form as in any other, this led me to hand in the result of those experiments for that purpose. I would here



however observe, that, my time & opportunities  
for experimenting, have been so limited, I am  
afraid I shall not do justice to the character  
of the article, such facts however as I have collect-  
ed, & such observations as I have made are  
readily submitted, trusting that at some future  
period I shall be enabled to examine into its  
virtues more fully & satisfactory.





"Contemplating the numberless diseases to which man is liable, & which may cause him to drag out a protracted life of misery & distress, or suddenly to cut him off in the bloom of his existence & amidst his usefulness, we must adore that divine excellence which has in medicine given to us the means of counteracting those dreadful evils, which otherwise would have severely molested our temporal condition".

And to what country has "the father of nature" been more liberal in these blessings than to the United States, where can we find, in any lands, a greater profusion of these gifts & by which the mortal part of man may be restored from almost total dissolution to comparative soundness. And have we not been guilty of a serious cause of reproach in neglecting these favours, thereby rendering our:



which dependant on foreign nations for ar-  
 ticles necessary to our existence? It is but  
 too true. Let us rouse ourselves then from  
 this lethargy (the true cause of our neglect)  
 & exert every power, by industry, perseverance  
 & individual enterprise, to gain a price for  
 our articles of the *Materia medica*, as we have  
 already done for our skills as Surgeons and  
 Practitioners. - Speak as an American -  
 It is in this way only that a perfect & com-  
 prehensive knowledge of nature can be  
 acquired. The knowledge of the *Materia medica*  
 in the old countries, was gradually brought  
 to that capacious extent, in which it exists  
 at present, by a long series of experiments, aid-  
 ed by the resources of travellers & naturalists,  
 & the discoveries & combinations of chemists:  
 but it is not from the labours of one indivi-  
 dual, tho' he were a Linnaeus, that a -



Knowledge of nature is to be gained; it sho<sup>d</sup>.  
be the combined efforts of all who profess to  
practice medicine, more particularly of the  
junior members of the profession, & it is from  
those we are to look for this undertaking.

We may express a hope that the time is  
not far distant, when this shall be no  
longer in anticipation. "Most evils have  
their correctives, & it would seem especially to  
be a part of the benevolent scheme of Providence,  
that the malignant distempers incident to a cli-  
mate, should be invariably associated with  
their appropriate remedies. If this be the case,  
can there be a nobler field for our exertions,  
than that which lies before us (the U.S.)? The  
immense regions which we claim, tho' hitherto  
little explored, are known to be exuberant  
in the most active vegetables. It is more  
than probable, that on some of the alpine



lights, or along the margin of those bold  
streams which pervade our wide, broad  
continent; there bloom many a plant, whose  
virtues, now flung on the "desert air", may  
be peculiarly adapted to the gigantic forms  
of disease, & capable of reducing the lengthened  
catalogue of the *pharmacopoeia medicorum*."

These observations are not made in criticism  
or censure, as a prelude to the consideration of  
an article bearing the power of "reducing  
the lengthened catalogue of the *pharmacopoeia  
medicorum*"; but to show that it is only by  
experiment that we are to discover the  
value or usefulness of an article for medical  
uses is its object. If we neglect those of minor  
importance how are we to find out those  
having great powers.





Botanical History

The *Stillingia*\* in the classification  
of Linnaeus is of the class Monocotyledonae  
order Monadelph.

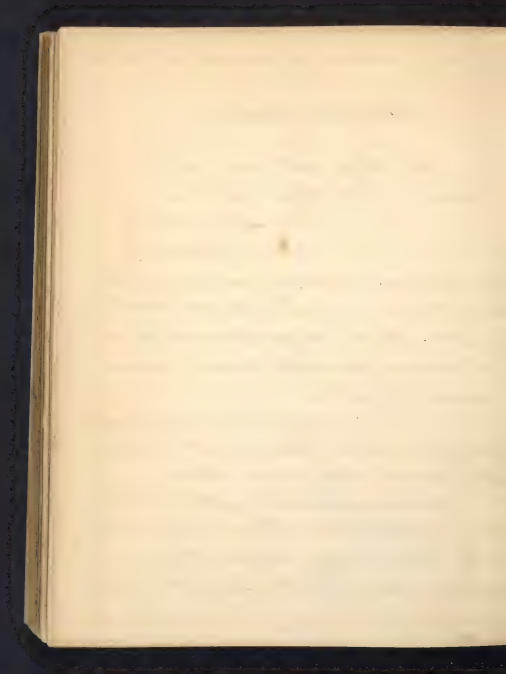
Species - *Sylvestris*

thus described. - *Stillingia*. Male. calyx 6-  
merous, tubular, many-flowered; corolla tubular,  
incised. Female. calyx 1-flowered, inferior;  
corolla superior; style 3-lobed; capsule 3-celled.

Species - *Sylvestris*

(cardinalis, shrub with erect  
milky stems, leaves opposite, smooth to shining;  
spike terminal, sessile; flowers yellow.

The above classification notices but one  
species, *Sylvestris*; this <sup>the</sup> one we are to consider  
in the following essay. Professor Elliot in his  
excellent work, notices three species, thus as -



arranged. — *Stillingia*

Class - Monocotyledons  
 Order - Monocotyledons  
 Species - *Sylvatica*  
 " *oleifera*  
 " *Lignosus*

In the "Families of Plants" it is under the same class & order, but, one species noticed. As we are interested only in the species *Sylvatica*, & the description given of it by Professor Elliot being the most satisfactory, I prefer using his authority. After his classification, as above noticed, he describes this species in the following manner.

*Sylvatica*. Lin.

Herbaceous; leaves sessile, oblong lanceolate, tapering at base, serrulate, sterile fls. not scarcely longer than the bracteal scale. Root large, woody, perennial. Stem herbaceous,



2-3 feet high somewhat angled by the base of the leaves with the whole plant glabrous and pubescent. Leaves alternate irregularly serrulate somewhat coriaceous, shining on the upper surface, paler beneath. Stipules: several small subulate glands in the axils of the leaves & flowers. Flowers in a terminal spike, the upper crowded as in an umbel, sterile, with intruding fertile ones. Fertile flowers few at the base. Petiole sterile. Calyx a scar, ovate, obtuse, mucronate, many flowered. Corolla 1-lobed, imbricate slightly, in rose yellowish, the border somewhat bilobed, undulate, filament 2, thick, longer than the corolla. Petal 5. Calyx obtuse. Corolla superior, 1-lobed, with the margin fimbriate. Style erect; 3-lobed, (lobes 3 united). Capsules rather rough, 3-celled, one seed in each cell.

Grows in dry sandy soils.

Flowers in May - June.



We are now fully possessed of the botanical history of this plant, & have been perhaps more minute in its description than its virtues, to be soon examined, with recompense for, be this as it may, yet I think it is necessary that its characters should be as well known, as if it proved valuable.

### Medicinal Properties

When this article was first brought to my notice, independent of its applications to disease, it bore the character of being an emetic; In my experiments with it, it has supported that character, & I think exhibited in no stronger manner the property of a cathartic; In its use in diseases it was given as an alterant, which I think it possesses in the greatest degree. The value of it however will be better determined by stating the result of the experiments in regular order.





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Emetic Property.

Case 1.<sup>st</sup> Mr. S...., who had been for some time troubled with an eruption on his shoulders & part of his back, was recommended to try a decoction of this root with a view to its alterant effect; (decoction made by boiling an ounce of the root in a pint of water down to three gills) he did so, & on taking the first dose, directed to be a common tea-cup-ful, it proved emetic vomiting being freely & copiously.

Case 2.<sup>d</sup> A child after a little persuasion, as an experiment was induced to chew a bit of the root & swallow his saliva; after he had continued it for twenty-five or thirty minutes he was affected with a "deadly sickness" at his stomach, unattended with vomiting; he was compelled to seek a recumbent posture for relief, but its effects lasted some hours.

Case 3.<sup>rd</sup> On visiting a man a day or two

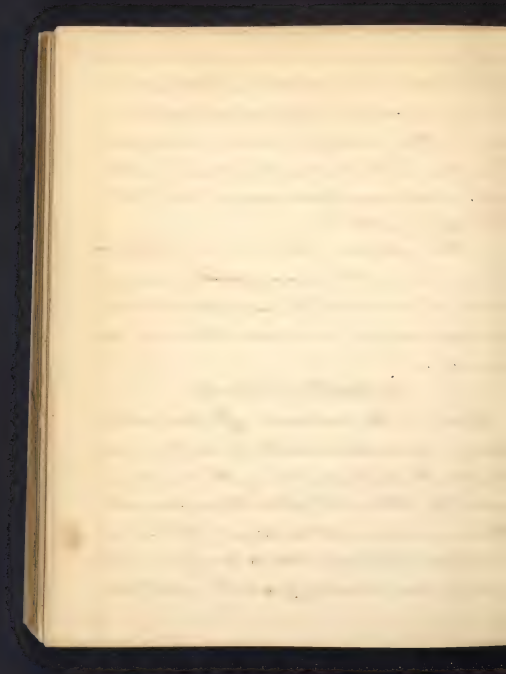


after he had commenced the use of this article, he complained to me of its violent effects upon him that morning, he said, "I use his own expression, "he had almost burked his insides out". In this case it was used in form of  $\text{gr}$  dose  $\text{gr}$  every two hours.

These cases prove that the Stillingia possesses an emetic power, but we are possessed of so many articles which rank higher as emetics, that it would be superfluous to value this one for that property.

### Cathartic Property

Case. — An individual afflicted with bilious was ordered an emetic by his physician. I asked the privilege of trying the powdered root of the Stillingia to effect the purpose; with this view I administered  $\text{xxv}$  grs of the powder, & directed it to be repeated in twenty minutes, — it was done accordingly, & on the repetition



instead of having the expected effect, it proved a strong cathartic, purging him three or four times. I made no farther experiments with the powder: but must grant that, invariably, in whatever form it was used, it had a tendency to Reg<sup>l</sup> the bowels & Sec.

It would be as well to observe here, that a young friend, who had some opinion of this plant & to whom I am indebted for the case concluding this essay, observed to me that he "had never used the Stillingia without its proving diuretic". I granted to him its virtues as an emetic & cathartic, but could not concede this point, as I had never found the least tendency to an action on the urinary organs, in any of my experiments. He may be correct notwithstanding, tho' I should attribute its diuretic effect more to the water taken in with it. It never however will rank as of consequence.



## Application to Disease

In the following cases of the use of the article in disease, I shall give a fair statement of facts, & allow them to speak for themselves. I am not prejudiced against the plan, as the tenor of this discourse shows, & the following cases will prove.

Case 1<sup>st</sup>. The first case in which I used the article, was in a child, son of scrupulous parents, but previous to this time exhibiting a good frame of body, tho' very nervous in constitution; - one of the signs of a constitution affected with a scrupulous diathesis. The disease for which he was treated, was a breaking out; - clear small in circumference, - tho' deep, about the face, neck, & head, accompanied with a swelling; - the front of the right cheek, one ulcer was observed in place. The character of these ulcers was not decided of a scrupulous nature, tho' evidently, prompted from





having, under the former treatment, by his habit  
 of bed. Having determined on the use of the Stiller  
 & it was directed to be given in the form of  
 decoction, as follows. Stiller in pint of boiling  
 water 6i. to be simmered over the fire down to  
 three gills, this divided into four equal parts  
 one to be given every third hour. I will state  
 that, previous to the use of this remedy, from be-  
 ing much in the gut & air, as has been observed,  
 he became exceedingly agitated in spirits. he  
 noticed no one & appeared to care for no one  
 but his mother; his appetite was gone, not  
 even such articles as children are most com-  
 monly fond of, as sweet things &c. would tempt  
 him; his strength failed very perceptibly. From  
 such a state he certainly was relieved, in a week,  
 by this plant. the change was soon, in doing  
 the ucers were so much cured as to require little or  
 no further attention; he recovered his power, & was



...to this, it is, that was very great; the medicine  
with some (some of) the other was however a great  
thing, & the disease is much relieved in some cases  
- but not requiring more attention no longer. &  
however, in such the decision of the continued  
some say, & longer to, in fact, the case.

...in fact, this was a very case in many  
of the article, but unfortunately it is not in fact  
in by others.

Case 2<sup>d</sup>. In justice I am compelled to give  
the following case, because in "at least" under  
the use of this medicine, but which that in the  
making of cases, and under agitation with "con-  
siderable" and "real" operations of the heart, with  
and the disease is removed as it can be done  
by the use of any internal remedy; this plan was  
fully, however, in this case. The reason for  
using it in this case was, from having heard  
it highly praised for its power over the disease.



U....., an Italian, was admitted into the  
 Store-house Hospital, in Charleston, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of  
 April; when examined by the attending Physician  
 it was found to have a tumor in each  
 groin; no marks, but "a swelling". The tumors  
 were ordered to be blistered. I then asked the  
 surgeon, by giving the effect of the Sclerogins,  
 having the character of a tumor of it. - He  
 consented to the experiment being tried, before  
 however he commenced its use the tumors had  
 been reduced, & had drawn in a considerable  
 degree, they were ordered to be taken off in order  
 to prove the power of the root. 13<sup>th</sup> He com-  
 menced the use of the decoction a pint a day.  
 16<sup>th</sup> We found the swelling decreased; the tumors  
 much reduced, & entirely relieved from pain; on  
 the 20<sup>th</sup> the swelling had ceased entirely; the  
 swellings in the groin reduced, the scrotum hard  
 & the tumor. After continuing the remedy a few



days longer he left the house well. I must state  
that when he entered the hospital he was stained  
more or less with a sore mouth, his  
spirits were greatly depressed, & after leaving  
about four or five days, & a half of the  
detention, he was coming out from there, &  
his spirits astonishingly improved. His action  
upon the nervous system at all events is pretty  
evident, more so than that the 1. I believe I  
found it acted in an antidote.

Case 3<sup>rd</sup>. Holands was handed over to me  
as a fine case to try the 1. I believe he had  
psoriasis Syphilis. When examined he was found  
in the following state; his penis was swollen to  
about three times its natural size, with a sore  
on the under side of the prepuce as large as a  
half dollar piece, not a chancre, & a bubo in the  
right groin which had burst before I had seen  
him, his legs & extremities were covered with a





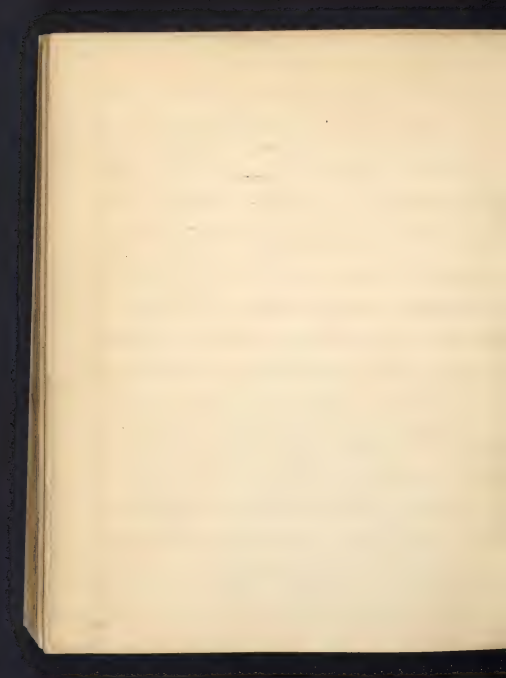
brown coloured eruption not raised from the  
 surface, his general health was much affected,  
 he complained of constant pains over his whole  
 body, increased at night, he was decidedly of a  
 scrofulous habit. The statement made of this  
 case satisfied me that it would require more  
 to conquer it, than I expected to find in the  
 Stillington; the result was more satisfactory than  
 I had anticipated, yet I do not <sup>attribute</sup> all the advan-  
 tages gained, to the article used, but partly to the  
 auxiliary remedies, such as attention to diet  
 &c. state of stomach &c. &c. &c. the result  
 speaks for itself. - Immediately after he was  
 examined he was directed to be put <sup>under</sup> the Stillington  
 in form of 3<sup>d</sup> dose 3ij, to 3j of water to be  
 given every third hour. About a half an hour  
 after he had taken this dose he had a call to  
 stool, & in a short time to a second, his bowels  
 previously been rather costive. Soon after the



second stool - five days afterwards came over him  
 + a tendency to sleep: which often gratified  
 nocturnal visits to his bed. It will unnece-  
 sary to detail each days appearance, suffice  
 it to say that, in a fortnight or better he left  
 the house, advantaged by treatment he had  
 undergone no doubt, but how much must  
 be attributed to this article it would be diffi-  
 cult to tell. The sore on the face as before  
 showed was not a chancre, therefore nothing  
 but cleanliness, + one or two punctures to remove  
 its irritability, was required for its cure; the  
 same may be said of the suppurated tumor.

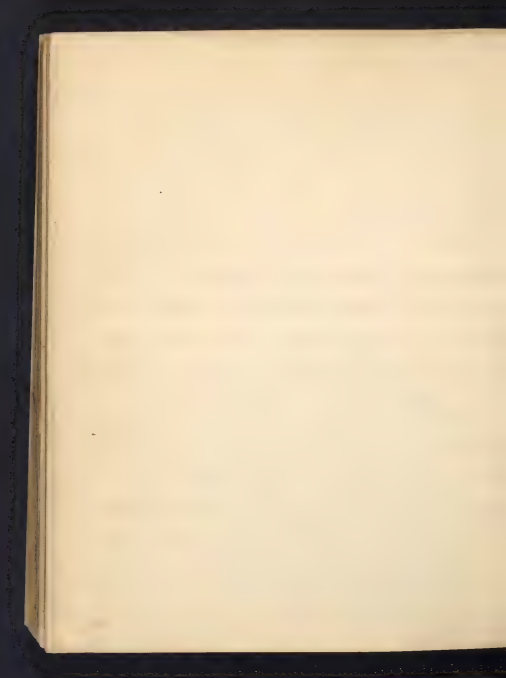
The fact was that the patient had neglect-  
 ed himself, previous to, as well as after  
 his complaint. His mind is decidedly fixed  
 & small, that it does not on the nervous system  
 in other words is a solution.

In the following case of rheumatism treated with

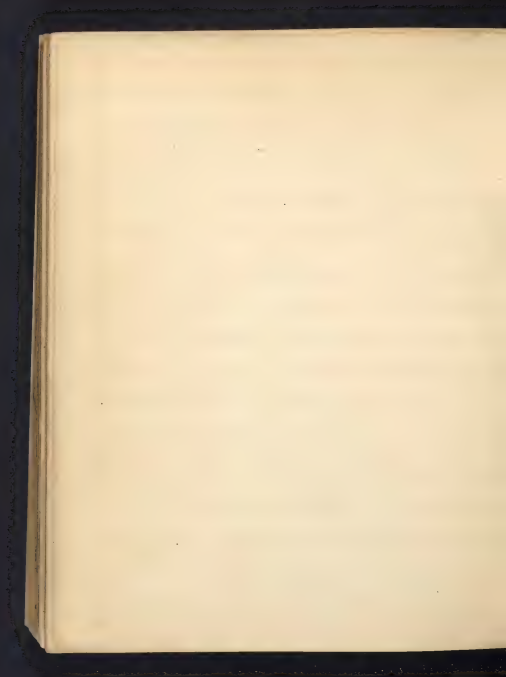


this article I am indebted to a friend. I can vouch  
for the truth of the statement, as I witnessed a  
great part of the treatment myself; it was made  
too in the Marine Hospital of Constantinople under  
the superintendence of the attending, English  
of these Institutions, who made the statement &  
upheld it to its truth. It is one of the strongest  
supports the article has, for its character; but  
still, it will be observed that he had been under  
the best treatment, as commonly practiced, here  
for a protracted disease we shall not attempt  
to say. I give the case verbatim as rec<sup>d</sup> it.

Case 4<sup>th</sup>. Garrison, a patient at the Marine  
hospital, 40 yrs of age, states that, "last Nov<sup>r</sup> when  
under the operation of mercury for the cure of  
syphilis, he went to sea & being much exposed  
contracted a rheumatism, under which attack  
he has been labouring for four months: the  
greater part of this time he had been confined



to his bed, unable to move himself in any manner, & seldom has been without extreme pain. He now lies constantly on his back with his legs drawn up, & his countenance expressive of great agony. All the usual remedies have been tried for his relief, but in vain; & without his pills of opium at night he is unable to get a wink of sleep. On the 20<sup>th</sup> his calomel & opium being continued as usual, he was advised to make a tincture, part of the decoction of the St. Ivingia and repeat it three or four times a day, in the place of a tonic infusion he had been hitherto using. To the 25<sup>th</sup> he had been each day more relieved by the article; it produced a good deal of sleep which relieved his pains very much; his disturbed appearance was greatly removed, & tho' to day it has increased a little considerably, his appetite has enormously increased. To the 30<sup>th</sup> he gradually improved, & on this day sailed for the first time

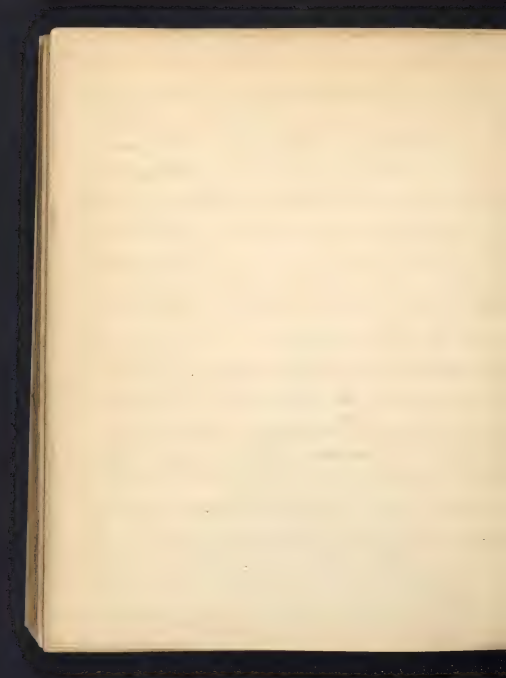




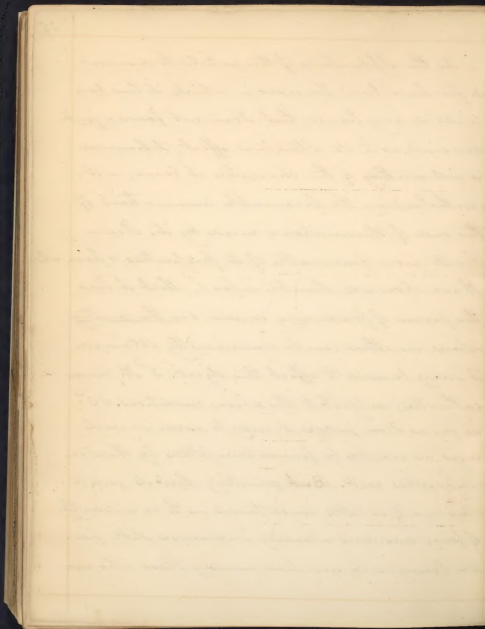
since his arrival at the hospital he seems to have  
 kept the previous night's position. There he has  
 some for some more time before he will be in  
 conversation with the physician. Dr. Barry's pulse  
 was so well preserved with the effects of this and  
 that he ordered all other medicines to be continued  
 no longer. July 3<sup>rd</sup> He moved on & lay down with  
 considerable ease, & slept at night without the aid  
 of any opium pills; his bowels are kept regularly  
 open &c. 12<sup>th</sup> In, novels, says he feels like "legs  
 going out of joints", during the night he drank  
 a quart of water, which, he observed he had done  
 ever since he had commenced with this water.  
 16<sup>th</sup> Is able to sit up, & turn him self gently in  
 bed, & then bring to expectorate the mucus. 2 days the  
 w.r. of the poultice test, then twice a day &  
 stopped the operation. 22<sup>nd</sup> Says his bowels are  
 rather too open, & attributes it to the poultice, &  
 therefore moved in directions, & in being able



to walk on his crutches, trusted the perception  
of the cure to exercise. 25<sup>th</sup> & bad, rainy day  
which affects him a little, having a little pain  
every now & then, ordered 8ss of the powder  
at bed time. 26<sup>th</sup>, powder very fitted him, for tho'  
the day is cloudy & damp, it does not affect him  
his general improvement continues. August  
1<sup>st</sup> The weather continuing bad, & he being a  
little indisposed, he has taken a slight cold  
which brought on his pains in a degree, directed  
℞ Stillingeria to be divided into six, powders, &  
one to be taken three times a day. 6<sup>th</sup> He feels  
much better. 10<sup>th</sup> He feels so well that he  
asked for his discharge this morning, & has  
taken his baggage for New York. I shall  
make no comment on this case, but merely  
observe that, I wish some had allowed me to  
have tried this article in a similar case which  
was offered me.



In the application of this article to disease so few have been the cases in which it has been tried in my hands, that I can not form a just decision as to its alternative effect; it however is not worthy of the character it bears, notwithstanding the favourable termination of the case of Rheumatism cured by it. I can speak more favourably of its properties, & from what I have observed, should infer 1<sup>st</sup> That it has the power of producing emesis, & in the country where no other can be conveniently obtained, it may be used to effect this object. 2<sup>d</sup> It proves cathartic; subject to the above conditions. & 3<sup>d</sup> as far as I can judge it may be used in such cases as would be found benefitted by the Sarsaparilla root. But granting that its qualities are of so little importance as to be unworthy of being considered a remedy in disease, still, from the character it now has among those who use



it from popular opinion, it should not be allowed to pass unnoted; & it is here that I would to medicines, apply the observations of the great Armstrong made in reference to cases of disease, he says, "In modern publications it is perhaps too much the fashion, if such an expression be allowable in science, to exhibit the successful result of experiments, & to keep the unsuccessful cases in the back grounds. It was the custom of Hippocrates & Sydenham to publish cases of failure as well as of success: & the former might be made fully as useful as the latter, by serving, like charts, to guard others from the mistakes which had been previously made".

It is in this character that I offer these candid observations.

